

JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

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WORLD STUDENT CHRISTIAN FEDERATION SPONSORS SECOND ASIAN CONFERENCE

The Second Asian Conference on the Life and Mission of the Church, sponsored by the World Student Christian Federation was held from May 19 to May 31 at the Japan Christian Academy House at Oiso, Japan. The first of this kind was held seven years ago.

The theme was The Role of The University Man on Modernizing Asia; Christian Commitment and Academic Responsibility. There were about 120 participants from 16 Asian nations (New Zealand and Australia are included here) who are Christian college or university professors and student movement leaders. Discussions were focused on the definition of modernization and the relationship between Asian traditions and modernization.

Asia has experienced extensive modernization since the adoption of western nationalism; the present-day knowledge of science and technology are also responsible. Historically speaking, modernization in Asia started at the close of the 19th century through colonialism under European nations. Most universities were founded in the latter part of the 19th century and played the role of transmitting European culture to Asia. Thus, in a sense, universities are European offshoots in Asia. In a hundred years Protestantism also took a part in this trend of introducing European civilization into Asia.

Today many people in Asia feel that modernization is a supreme must. It is the responsibility of the university man to bring this about by taking part in the formation of a new economic system and the process of change in society through the individual and thus through society. In all this a problem is raised. True modernization does not mean that Asian nations are to swallow up European rationalism and technology in order to bring about changes in the social system.

Modernization in Asia also has its detrimental side; one bad result is the denoument of man, the loss of the creative urge which has such an effect upon university life. The university is supposed to be the place for study. Its function, however, has been changed to a machine for mass production of people who are needed in society.

The responsibility of university man is to bring modernization into Asia based upon Asian tradition, cultural background and history.

The conference was based on four main focal points:

1. The method of learning was discussed by Dr. C.A. Van Peursen of The Netherlands. He pointed out that the true attitude toward learning is no longer found in objective rationalism and mythological ideology, but rather in the grasping of truth actively and personally.
2. In the newborn nations of Asia and in those that are still in the process of forming, the responsibility of the university should be discussed. Dr. Notohamidjojo of Indonesia explained that in such nations as his, as well as in India, Burma, Ceylon and Pakistan, the role of the university has been set up according to nationalism. In this situation it does not act freely, but rather contributes to the ultimate goal of the nation. He also pointed out that it is very important, through difficult, to accept the nations request to proceed toward modernization and at the same time maintain a critical attitude toward the program if the national aim is too radical.
3. In the changing university the question is raised: what type of man is the university producing? The image of university man is explained as man with professional knowledge and skill as well as with the ability to cooperate with others. A well-balanced man is expected from the university.
4. There is an urgent need for present-day Christians to have new insights into nature and the secular world which are based upon the Bible. The Church should provide new attitudes and new understanding toward the present-day world. Father Paul Verghese of The Ceylon Orthodox Church, conference chaplain, and World Christian Council Associate General Secretary presented some of these new insights in his series of Bible studies.

EARTHQUAKE HITS JAPAN

On June 16 an earthquake struck seven prefectures in Japan. The hardest hit was Niigata City with a population of 340,000 and the largest petroleum and natural gas-producing center of Japan. For 24 hours the city was marooned and all communications were cut off. The city was without power, water and gas services. Tall apartment buildings were knocked over or tilted at various angles; streets showed huge, gaping crevices.

The resulting tidal wave rushed up the Shinano River flowing through the city. The river banks were destroyed at many points and much of the city was under water. The oil storage tanks which had been burning for more than 30 hours finally exploded.

A list of casualties and damage caused by the earthquake is as follows: Dead, 25; Injured, 385; missing, 11; Houses destroyed, 995; houses damaged, 7,528; houses washed away, 40; Houses inundated above first floor level, 11,074; Houses inundated below floor level, 8,669; Fields and rice paddies washed away, roughly, some 14,000 acres.

A special committee was set up in the National Christian Council, through which member churches and organizations cooperated in united witness and service to the victims in the area. Relief work camps, distribution of relief materials and the establishment of nurseries are being planned. The NCC has stated that any help they can render is for all people, not just Christians. Material aid, financial assistance and work camping for reconstruction involves many people and organizations. Young people from the Anglican Episcopal Church, United Church of Christ and the Lutheran Church are mobilized for long term work camps during the summer vacation.

Response from the Japanese churches is very good. There are a few Christian churches in the area that were damaged, and headquarters of respective denominations are assisting in the reconstruction of church buildings.

THE REVEREND TAIJI TAKAHASHI IN HAWAII

The Reverend Taiji Takahashi and his family of four are leaving for Hawaii. Rev. Mr. Takahashi is sent as a lifelong missionary associating with the Methodist Church in the United States. He will be working mainly with the Japanese who are stationed temporarily in Honolulu.

A graduate of the Tohoku University (the Department of Mechanical Engineering) and the Japan Biblical Seminary, Mr. Takahashi remarked: "I will do my best to bring the souls of the Japanese in Honolulu to Christ."

ALL PROTESTANT MINISTERIAL FELLOWSHIP

A fellowship meeting for all Protestant ministers was held in Tokushima City, in the southern part of Japan on June 2. There were 23 participants from the United Church of Christ in Japan, the Anglican/Episcopal Church, Baptist Churches and others. While they were having a gay time, there was a telephone call from a Roman Catholic priest who said, "I learned that the fellowship of all the Christian ministers was being held. I would very much like to attend the meeting." He was invited to attend unanimously by all those who were there. Father Tanaka said that he must correct his attitude toward the Protestants and do what he could toward living in unity in the Lord.

BUDDHISTS SEND SUTRAS TO DANISH CHRISTIANS

Thirty Buddhists have planned a visit to Denmark to thank the Danish Bible Society for the Christian Bibles presented to Japanese Buddhists a short time ago. (See Japan Christian Activity News #243). They are presenting the Sutras to the Danish Christians as a return token.

The group was organized at Tsukiji Honganji on June 9, prior to departure by SAS plane on June 10.

According to their itinerary, they remain in Denmark for several days attending conferences and lectures sponsored by the Danish Bible Society. Two of the Buddhist representatives gave lectures on Eternal Life and Zen. On Sunday, the 14th, they attended Christian Church services and observed social welfare institutions as well as visiting in Christian homes. On the 15th they presented the Sutras at the University of Copenhagen. They will extend their trip to include nations in Europe as well as North and South America.

Their return to Japan is planned for the early part of August.

TOKYO COUNCIL OF CHURCH WOMEN MEETS

The featured speaker of the Tokyo Council of Church Women (at Tokyo Union Church for its May meeting of installation of officers on May 18) was Mr. Kenneth R. Cullen who spoke on Bible Literature in Japan. Using a text from Matthew, he referred to trees and the maxim, by their fruits ye shall know them. He said there is an evil literature tree and a good literature tree. He developed his theme by describing the effect of literature, particularly pamphlets and tracts, on the people of Japan.

Mr. Cullen told the story of the Communist advance southward in China in 1938. The missionaries were under house arrest at the time, but one of them did chance to see two men carrying a printing press down the street. On the press was a large placard which read, "By this we conquer." The Communists won because of little pieces of paper with printing on them. No country as large as China, he said, could be completely taken over if it does not want to be; the people had been brainwashed.

In Hiroshima there is a bookstore. The Japanese in charge goes regularly to Iwakuni, across the bay. In the city is a very special bridge, a tourist attraction. In one afternoon 5,000 tracts can be handed out to passers-by. Some are thrown on the street and trodden under foot; other are placed in pockets or purse for future reading. One girl read hers and four weeks ago she was baptized. She was mightily impressed with the power of a printed tract.

In Sapporo, Hokkaido, where the speaker, an Australian, has been working for the last seven years in the program of the Japan Christian Literature Crusade, a girl worker in a hospital was very discouraged until she came across a book called A Grain of Wheat which tells the actual experiences of a Christian in Japan. It encouraged her in her life of witnessing and she has already given several copies of the book to other people.

He told another story of a young boy whose family had sent him regularly to Sunday school, although the others did not attend church. When they moved, the boy scouted the neighborhood for a Christian church. He came home and announced that he was going to continue attending Sunday school in his new home. He pestered his mother to go, and she too became a Christian as did the sister. This meant that only the father remained outside the Christian Church. The family subscribed to a little magazine called Gospel for the Millions. It was left around in obvious places and the father occasionally picked it up and read it, putting it down as soon as another member of the family entered the room. He read so much and became so knowledgeable that it was a natural step for him to become a Christian, too.

It is impossible to estimate the effect of literature in the life of the church. A reading church is a live church. Japanese Christians have not yet grasped the significance of literature, said Mr. Cullen, who spoke also of HOREMCCO, the Audiovisual agency in Hokkaido. Here two films are often shown during an evening. Somehow it always takes fifteen minutes to rewind the spools! A powerful Gospel message is sandwiched in between. It is not worth leaving as the captive audience wants to see the other film. He described one Kyodan church as a reading church which has increased its membership by 30%.

Mr. Cullen reports that their problems are in the realm of finance and personnel. Each time a book is published, capital is needed. There are too few Japanese who are willing to commit themselves to any other ministry than preaching. Some ministers, he avers, are not suited for the pulpit. There are many other ways in which they can serve.

Sell, don't give books or other literature away, he cautioned the group. Loa don't give away your own reading matter. No one is going to appreciate something for which he does not pay.

In the last fiscal year the Communists, he said, "have spent 22 million dollars for literature for Japan alone whereas the United States in the same period has spent some 4 millions to be distributed among several countries." It is not difficult to understand who will win the race, Mr. Cullen said, if this trend continues. He mentioned Mein Kampf and the tremendous impact that book has made since it was published in 1938. In 1915 Lenin began publishing a newspaper; this also has had great influence on the reading public.